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SUBJECT: YUDHOYONO ORDERS CRACKDOWN AGAINST MILITANT
ACTIVITIES

Classified By: Classified by Amb. B. Lynn Pascoe for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

Summary

1. (C) President Yudhoyono (SBY) has decided to act against militant activities that have increasingly threatened civil society, the rule of law and tarnished Indonesia's image. In the process, he has wrapped himself in a much more traditional nationalist mantle, using Pancasila ideology as a touchstone. Presidential aide Dino Djala reports that SBY has ordered a crackdown on the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI). On June 8, SBY convened his Cabinet to continue discussions on the GOI's plans to counter "anarchism" and militant activities. Afterwards, Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal, and Security Affairs Widodo A.S. made strong statements affirming a renewed political will to take action against violent organizations, a veiled reference to FPI among others. These statements followed SBY's June 1 speech on the Indonesian ideology of Pancasila, which extolled the virtues of reform while reminding Indonesians of the need for unity and national pride, particularly when faced by extremist sentiments. An incident where FPI militants shouted down former President Gus Dur has become the vehicle for the announced crackdown, the practical implementation of which is yet to play out. End Summary.

Decision Taken to Act

2. (C) President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono (SBY) has decided to act against militant organizations that have increasingly threatened the rule of law and civil society within Indonesia. This new government tact follows increasingly loud complaints within elites and other groups of the threat posed by thuggish organizations such as FPI threatening minorities, more religiously or socially liberal groups, or other supporters of pluralism in the name of Islam. In many cases, violence was neither prevented nor prosecuted. The Ambassador has regularly voiced our concerns about these trends with senior officials.

Cabinet Meets to Discuss "Anarchism"

3. (C) SBY convened his Cabinet June 8 to continue discussions on "anarchism," extrajudicial actions by militant

groups, and the steps the GOI must take to combat them. Leaders from Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), Indonesia's largest Islamic group, attended along with Cabinet officials. Minister of Law and Human Rights Hamid Awaluddin told us privately that this was one of several recent Cabinet meetings focused on developing the GOI's response to extremism. He praised the determination of National Police Chief Sutanto for his willingness to tackle the problem. Awaluddin added that the GOI is still grappling with how to disband groups that were never formally registered with the government in the first place.

Political Cover for Stronger Action

¶4. (U) Coordinating Minister for Political, Legal, and Security Affairs Widodo A.S. spoke to the press after the meeting, accompanied by Indonesian Armed Forces (TNI) Commander Air Chief Marshal Djoko Suyanto, National Police Chief Sutanto, and Home Affairs Minister Mohammad Ma'ruf. The press quotes him as saying:

"Acts promoting anarchy, threats of terror, or moves to take the law into one's own hands are classified as crimes, which will be processed under the country's existing laws. The government cannot allow or tolerate (anarchy) in any form against anyone or any group. Our policy is clear, that we must enforce the supremacy of the law and equality before the law."

"I know that law enforcers at all levels have faced a certain amount of pressure from various parties when they deal with these groups, and I am assuring them now that the government

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will provide protection to them when they carry out their duties."

Disbanding the Violent, Unruly Mass Organizations

¶5. (U) Widodo also said that although the GOI respects the right of the people to belong to organizations, "if these activities disturb public order, we do have a right to disband them," pointing to Law 8/1985 as the legal basis to do so. He added, "We will not differentiate groups. As long as they carry out acts of anarchy and violence, we will act." Later statements also included the threat of violence as a reason for the GOI to act.

¶6. (U) The Home Affairs Ministry will reportedly distribute guidelines to provincial governments on dissolving organizations which threaten public security and national integrity and foment ethnic or religious conflict. The Ministry released information to the press enumerated 1060 registered organizations, with 69 religious, 118 professional, and 873 other non-governmental groups. The Ministry will also address unregistered organizations, but details regarding specific actions were not mentioned.

FPI Goes too Far

¶7. (C) The planned action by the Yudhoyono Administration came on the heels of members of the Islamic Defenders Front (FPI) angrily shouting down former Indonesian President Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur) during a speech promoting pluralism and tolerance in West Java earlier in the month. President Yudhoyono and Nadlahtul Ulama, which Gus Dur once headed, took great umbrage at the incident. Presidential adviser Dino Djalaal told the Ambassador June 8 that the President gave orders to crack down on FPI. The Gus Dur incident has apparently given Yudhoyono the kind of vehicle he needs to make the crackdown more politically palatable domestically. Previous FPI attacks on religious minorities such as the Ahmadiyahs did not generate sufficient outrage in

the political classes.

Pancasila: Unifying Ideology Once Again?

18. (C) On June 1, President Yudhoyono gave an address on the need for Indonesia to remember its foundations in Pancasila, the founding ideology of the nation. The speech, which one Djalal's staff members told us Yudhoyono wrote himself, acknowledged the difficult and challenging times Indonesians have faced since the fall of Suharto; however, it also reminded Indonesians that reform which attempts to remove all reminders of the past has no anchor and can lend itself to extreme positions and reactions. Yudhoyono cautioned against this, calling on Indonesians to show restraint and to remember their heritage in Pancasila. His nationalist argument extolled the virtues of a strong, stable, and well-meaning government essential for Indonesia to be successful in the future. The speech calls for a moderate response from all segments of society to the challenges Indonesia faces or may face in the future, reminding Indonesians that they are a united people and that extremist activities and "anarchism" are anathema to the founding credo of the country.

Comment

19. (C) The Pancasila, while damaged as a concept during the Suharto years, nonetheless embodies values that counter those who would push Indonesia towards becoming an Islamic state. Normally, many of the traditional nationalist political elites should be attracted by this approach. However, many are in the opposition due to the threat SBY has posed with his goal to eradicate corruption and the fact that he was elected without the support of the country's two largest parties. The statements by the Yudhoyono Administration call for strong action, but the real question is what specific action will ensue. A crackdown on "anarchism" and violence would be a positive development to strengthen civil society

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and the rule of law and would respond to the complaints, including ours, of government inaction against extremist organizations that have tarnished progress in other areas.

PASCOE